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ORIGINAL GOVERNOR'S MANSION SECRET GARDEN TOUR BLOOMS

Just like Montana's flowers and plants, the Original Governor's Mansion Secret Garden Tour will bloom Sunday (June 24) in a profusion of beauty and summer fun.

Six of Helena's finest private gardens will be on the tour this year from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the OGM will be open free to the public during that same time with entertainment and lunch on the lawn for those who participate.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 the day of the tour with children under 12 years of age for \$5. Tickets for lunch on the lawn of the OGM, catered by Benny's Bistro, also are \$10 in advance and \$12 the day of the tour. All proceeds benefit the OGM restoration fund.

"This event has been growing through the years, literally," Sue Near of the Montana Historical Society, which oversees the mansion, said. "It is a festive day for not only enjoying the beautiful gardens and their secret places, but also for our wonderful volunteer OGM Board to show off what truly is one of the Queen City's historic jewels."

Advance tickets are available at both Leslie's Hallmark stores, Mountain West Bank, Benny's Bistro, the Montana Historical Society Museum Store, and Futura Lane. They are available only at the OGM the day of the tour. Great items donated by local businesses will be raffled the day of the event.

Because it is a "secret tour," maps directing people to the gardens must be picked up the day of the tour at the OGM.

Major sponsors this year are Mountain West Bank, Diamond Construction, and Bjerke Architects.

A marketplace that includes 18 vendors selling a wide variety of unique merchandise will be set up on the Ewing Street in front of the OGM, and music will be provided by the Queen City Consort.

Also for sale at the event are art prints commemorating the event by Helena artist Carol Novotne, who rarely allows prints of her original work. Her featured artwork celebrating the secret garden tour is “Red, Red Roses,” and it is a limited edition of 150 prints at \$35 a piece. She will be at the mansion re-marquing the print for those who purchase them.

Bob Morgan’s limited edition “Montana’s First Governors Mansion,” will also be on sale. Proceeds from both go to the OGM restoration fund.

The gardens on this year’s tour have such features as a year-round fish pond, “a vision of pure chromatic energy stretched into the distance,” a tribute to a mother and grandmother, and other special touches by some special gardeners, Near said.